

Hong Kong

18 August, 1990

Dear Susie,

We were very sorry to hear about your recent illness and operation, and send our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

I am reminded of a discussion with Khun Sujin when she was in Hong Kong a couple of years ago for Chinese New year. She was talking to a friend of ours, Renate, as we walked along the harbour admiring the lights. Renate mentioned that she was very attached to her body and liked to be comforted and touched physically, and as a result found it hard to live on her own. Khun Sujin said that we are all attached to our body in our different ways. We wash it, we dress it, we put lotions on it, we feed it, we protect it from the sun, we exercise it but in the end what does it do? Like a snake, it turns round and bites us. No matter how much care we have given, it just waits its time and chance to bite and eventually kill us. The more attached we are to it, the more we expect of it, the worse the shock will be when it chooses its chance to pounce.

Perhaps we should say that every time we are sick it should be a reminder of what the nature of this snake is...a taste of just how sick it can make us in the end. If it gives us a nasty bite which isn't fatal (as in your case), the reminder that one of these days it will be fatal for us all should encourage us to see the urgency of developing more understanding and making the most of the opportunities for kusala. All day we follow our lobha, looking for diversions or pleasant experiences. If just for a moment and then another moment and another a little awareness develops it can begin to be accumulated to swim against the tide. We cannot beat the snake. We can take medicines, follow everything in our knowledge which will give us a little extra time, but eventually and inevitably it will be time for the fatal bite. Fire is on our head and we should be glad of any reminders, however tough the form they take. Usually I find that while I am sick or recovering or having a hard time, it's not too difficult to remind myself of the snake and value of more dhamma considering. The test is when we appear to be recovered, when everything is back to 'normal' and the snake we wish to forget about is forgotten to everyone's relief. We are now back to following the objects of our lobha and the subject of the snake is dropped. What about the urgency now?

J. thought you might like some extra reading at this time and as a result, he's kindly picked out some extracts from my weekly diary (meant to be a dhamma diary but often wanders into less noble spheres!)....as you've been here,

you may be interested to see how we're doing...there's  
plenty more if you get bored anytime....

Best wishes

Sarah

to  
end.